

Heymann Primary and Nursery School Play Policy

1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to all children.

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale is that *"... better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life."*

Our play approach supports the following of our school aims:

- Achieve their individual potential.
- Develop respect for themselves, others and the environment.
- Develop their skills and knowledge to lead a safe and healthy life.
- Become self-confident, responsible and independence.
- Develop a positive approach to mental health and understand themselves.
- Be proud of who they are and what they have achieved.

Ultimately, we want our children to have happy, memorable experiences of school life and be kind, caring and respectful members of the community.

In addition, our play approach supports our Heymann Highway learning behaviours and curriculum drivers (Diversity, Emotional intelligence, creative thinking, community).



3. Definition and value of play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is essential to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different concepts and ideas.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others. This is through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, individuals and all children across Key stages.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, building on resilience skills and creating memorable experiences.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

Our play approach also supports:

- Key priority 3 in our school improvement plan 2023-2026 has within it a focus on personal development
- Our play approach supports our School Games Gold Award, our commitment to Healthy Schools, and our Green Flag Award through repurposing and recycling materials for play.
- Our commitment to British Values the rule of law through setting agreed rules and safety measures and democracy through pupils influencing our approach and co-writing risk benefit assessments. It also builds mutual respect and being tolerant of others' ideas through sharing of resources and respecting pupils' ideas and creations.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school will:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- Allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide a range of environments that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide a range of environments that will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.

5. Rights

Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes *the right to play, recreation and leisure* (Article 31) and the *right of children to be listened to on matters important to them* (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

We also recognise that this is an important opportunity for children to become responsible members of their community through partnering with adults to establish rules and risks regarding use of resources and equipment.

Providing opportunities for self-directed play will develop children's knowledge to respect themselves, others and the environment and become self-confident, responsible and independent.

6. Benefit and risk

'Play is great for children's wellbeing and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.'

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. As outlined in the play sector publication 'Best Play', play provision should aim to *'manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe from harm'*.

Through play children can have the opportunity to make decisions and learn about engaging in risk. This helps them develop skills and knowledge which they can apply to new situations and lead a safe and healthy life.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments the school will practice dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them. This approach enables children to reach their individual potential. Identified children have an additional, individual risk assessment which is shared with parents/carers.

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (September 2012) as the principal value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide* (Play Safety Forum, 2012).

See HSE Managing Risk Statement (Doc 4.6) appendix 1 [4.6 GUIDANCE Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) – Managing Risk in Play and Leisure \(1\).pdf](#)

7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During lunchtime at HPNS, children will be supervised at a 1:32 ratio (minimum). However, where children have been identified as needing additional support this will

be recognised in the support ratios. Identified children who have an additional adult have an individual risk assessment which is shared with parents/carers.

The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, and children with additional needs identified, the school does not believe direct supervision is beneficial. In general, supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

8. The adult's role in play

The school will help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play by the provision of trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.

The playworker's core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced playworker is capable of enriching the child's play experience both in terms of the design and resources of the physical environment and in terms of the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting to allow children to be responsible for their own play in the mutually agreed environment. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools, and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited.

See our Playwork Principles appendix 2. [5.5 GUIDANCE Childhood, Play and the Playwork Principles. Play Wales Playwork Guide #1 \(1\).pdf](#)

9. Equality and diversity

Through providing a rich play offer meeting every child's needs we will ensure all children can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

10. Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play in a safe space. We also believe that fostering a healthy respect for the play environment around them will help children to develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the wider environment. Children will be encouraged to make appropriate choices and take responsibility for dressing appropriately to their environment, for example, wearing wellies before they embark on muddy play. The play environment will help children to develop team building skills and negotiation skills which will enhance their resilience and their social and emotional capabilities. We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school's grounds to enhance play. We will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

List of policies linked to play policy:

Behaviour and Relationship policy



SEND policy
Equality and Diversity policy
Anti-bullying policy
Child friendly anti-bullying policy
Health and Safety policy
PSHE policy
Child Protection policy

